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seek to retain and fulfil the spirit of his life than if we regard the spirit as bound to the letter? Apocalypticism was a natural mode of thought in early Chris-

tian days, but has it not become unnatural for our days? Are we not false to the ultimate spirit of Christianity if we continue to retain it?

THE ALLEGED EGOTISM IN THE DEMAND FOR PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

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As never before the world is interested in immortality. To no subject has more thought been given. War makes death more immediate and real. Death gives us more concern as to the future. Are we selfish in wanting to live beyond death?

In his recent theological brochure, *God the Invisible King*, Mr. H. G. Wells has written as follows:

Many people seem to find the prospect of a final personal death unendurable. This impresses me as egotism. I have no such appetite for a separate immortality. God is my immortality; what, of me, is identified with God, is God; what is not is of no more permanent value than the snows of yesterday.¹

I choose the foregoing passage as a text for some remarks upon the prevalent, and perhaps growing, opinion which is there expressed. One hears a great deal about a certain sordid selfishness in those who cannot accept for man what is called the "common law of death." It is often suggested in the rationalist press that only the promise of a special and a quite unreasonable privilege in this respect for humanity beyond all other living things can blind the Christian world to the insuperable objections

against the Christian view. The more strident voices accuse us of intellectual dishonesty, of accepting a bribe to play fast and loose with evidence; in short, of what Huxley branded in his singular phrase as "the sin of faith." Mr. Wells uses this last word, as becomes one who is not a mid-Victorian, in a different sense from Huxley's. But he means very much the same and belongs to the same tradition. "Never more," he writes, "shall we return to those who gather under the cross. By faith we disbelieved and denied."² He has exhausted himself in panegyric upon those calm, scientific reasoners who adjust their creed strictly to the facts before them, and asks, almost in despair, when other thinkers—presumably philosophers, sociologists, or theologians—will learn the object-lesson in candor which a chemical or physical laboratory is fitted to teach them.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Preface, pp. xv-xvi.

² *God the Invisible King*, p. 13.

The present article, however, has no special concern with Mr. Wells. Nor do I mean to examine that very important aspect of the demand for immortality which urges that the very presence of so deep-seated a desire in mankind is itself an argument that the desire will be fulfilled. Our estimate of the validity of such considerations must depend on our whole view of the place of the will in knowledge. Most persons are aware that the contemptuous rejection of all logical force in "the will to believe" has suffered damaging criticism in recent years from our very foremost philosophic thinkers. Proof could even be advanced that Mr. Wells himself, in the pragmatic part of *First and Last Things*, has granted a good deal whose positive upshot he has not seen. But the purpose of this paper is strictly limited to one question: does the postulate of personal immortality spring from a motive that has the low moral character of egotism or does it spring from a motive that has the high moral character of faith in the cosmic scheme as fundamentally good?

I

Egotism is well known to be the parent of delusions, but a curious list might be made of the delusions which have sprung from taking egotism as a facile key to all the moods of mankind. The historian of thought is very familiar with those who have argued that there is no such thing as disinterestedness, and that wherever it pretends to exist we have a case of self-seeking in more or less

ingenious disguise. Hobbes treated in this way even the apparent altruism which binds a father to his children, and tried to palm off on us the grotesque libel about a latent expectation of reciprocal kindness from one's child in one's old age. Dryden caught up a similar idea when he wrote:

Our fond begetters, who would never die,
Love but themselves in their posterity.¹

Butler had to contend long and patiently that the existence of greed no more proves men to be without benevolence than the cases of suicide prove them to be without self-love. Carlyle at times seems to insist that virtue means utter self-abnegation. "Make thy claim of wages a zero; then hast thou the world at thy feet. . . . I tell thee, Blockhead, it all comes of thy vanity, of what thou fanciest those same deserts of thine to be."² A curious attitude for one who asserted so strenuously the moral eminence of Frederick the Great! John Stuart Mill and his school would have it that a desire for our neighbor's pleasure is at bottom a desire for our own pleasure—surely one of the oddest outrages ever committed against common sense by the men whom Matthew Arnold has entitled "athletes of logic."³ In our own time Nietzsche thought he had given a complete account both of the democratic movement and of the Christian religion as a desperate insurrectionary effort on the part of the lower type of man to assert himself against the upper type.⁴ Examples could be multiplied

¹ *Absalom and Achitophel*, I, 425-26. ² *Sartor*, Book II, chap. ix. ³ *Literature and Dogma*.

⁴ That expert casuist, Barry Lyndon, had a similar argument about gambling. Play, he held had fallen into moral disrepute though the egotism of those who preferred to swindle by a more plebeian instrument than cards. "It is a conspiracy of the middle classes against gentlemen: it is only the shopkeeper cant which is to go down nowadays."—Thackeray, *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, chap. ix.

at will, for we have here one of the recurring obsessions by which again and again philosophers have been misled after an explanatory will-o'-the-wisp. It is one of the *idola theatri* which is constantly obtruding itself to stop real progress in thinking until it has once more been exposed. Perhaps the closest analogue of all to the view which we have set out to consider is Shelley's speculation about the sense of guilt. In *The Revolt of Islam* that habit of self-distrust and self-condemnation which, one would have supposed, must be the very last to incur this sort of blame, is held up as a conspicuous example of egotism! Remorse, we learn, has its root in overestimate of our own so puny significance. We should have no gnawings of conscience, no worry about a disgraceful past, no haunting shame, if we realized just how little we matter in the scheme of things. What are *we* in the cosmic system?

Reproach not thine own soul, but know
thyself,

Nor hate another's crimes, nor loathe thine
own.

It is the dark idolatry of self

Which, when our thoughts and actions once
are gone,

Demands that man should weep and bleed
and groan;

O vacant expiation! be at rest—

The past is Death's, the future is thine
own.¹

Shelley, as we know, was as far as anyone from really approving of this attitude and of what would follow as its consequence. It is all the more significant that the subtleness of the fallacy should from time to time have imposed upon him. We do well to be

on our guard lest the old psychological trap opens at our feet again. For the reproach of egotism has been constantly launched against mankind from the most diverse quarters, not only by the most altruistic men, such as Mill, who are wronging their own disposition, but by the most egotistic, like Nietzsche, who have not humor enough to recognize the quaintness of their satire upon themselves. Let us look a second time at the present use that is being made of it, that we may not allow ourselves to be beguiled through a mock humility.

II

A man is not to be called an egotist because he makes a personal demand upon the universe, unless his demand is an unreasonable one and inconsiderate toward the demand of his neighbor. He may mean simply that *if* the scheme of things has been designed with fairness to the sentient creatures involved, such and such a destiny cannot be meted out to himself. No doubt he is under grievous temptation to overstate his own claim. But this is a temptation which it is surely possible to discount, and it is not satisfactorily escaped by running into the opposite extreme of denying that any claim exists at all. The specious pretense that it is noble to insist on the justice of a certain demand for someone else which it would be arrogant to put forward for ourselves looks very like a piece of vainglory. Do we not often say so because we want the distinction of greater self-denial as compared with others? If A is in the same case as B, then justice implies identical treatment for both, and A's reason must recognize this even when he himself

¹ *Revolt of Islam*, Canto VIII.

stands to profit. Now if, for example, it were in man's power to create a world of lower animals, common humanity would set limits to his using them in a way which ignored their sufferings. And if we believe that the Creator of mankind is just, we are entitled to say that there are some things which he would not do for any ulterior purpose whatever, because they would bear too harshly on the feelings of men. This is the very principle which those who deride it, as applied to the question of annihilation, are the first to insist upon as applied elsewhere. They specially emphasize it as applied to the moral difficulties of the Old Testament—to the treatment of the Amalekites or the sacrifice of Isaac. Still less is the stigma of selfishness to be affixed if what each of us asks for himself he asks equally for every member of the race. Egotism means expecting an undue personal privilege by which someone else's claim, though just as good as our own, would be prejudiced. For example, it was no egotistic allurements which was held out to the parents of mankind when they were promised that they should become "as gods, knowing good and evil." For there was no individual preference involved. The charge would have point if it had been implied that this knowledge was to perish with its first possessors, and that those who came after would be at special loss in consequence. But however else we may go wrong, we are at least not egotistic in pitching high the aspirations of our whole species.

The principle seems an obvious one, but it is persistently overlooked by

those who talk of the "grotesque exaggeration of one's own importance" in the demand for immortality, and of the likelihood that "the plans of God may be fulfilled without us." I have not now in view that quite consistent, if melancholy, position that the universe is unplanned and that its mechanical action is non-moral. I am thinking of those who declare that an equitable purpose of God need take no account of preserving the individual men by whom that purpose is achieved. To me this is as absurd as a moral defense for the car of Juggernaut. No doubt there are other values in the cosmic scheme besides the comfort of human beings. But to say that, no matter how completely our race has its feelings trampled upon and its interests sacrificed, there is no ground for complaint except by "egotists," is to provoke Mr. Hardy's caustic remark that such morality may be good enough for divinities, but is scorned by average human nature.¹ The arrangement may, indeed, be actual. Acceptance of it as a fact may be forced upon those who look with a calm, clear eye upon things as they are. We may, Prometheus-like, refuse to gratify with a single groan the diabolic Power which has made helpless creatures into mere material for the execution of its whims. Perhaps our very sensitiveness to pain is an added charm for the aesthetic effect upon a deity whose aims are beyond us. But it is too much to ask that the victims shall approve, and it is too much to suppose that they shall brand as selfish anyone who dares to repine or to suggest that something different would be more just.

¹ *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, chap. xi.

The reader may have heard of that singular epitaph:

Here lie I, David Ingelrod,
Have mercy on my soul, O God,
As I would do if I were God
And you were David Ingelrod.

There are some who will call these lines impious. To others they are instinct with that faith through which alone the mountains can be moved. When one speaks or thinks so, venturing to use about the Supreme the categories of our human conscience, some critic is sure to remind us either in religious phrase of the "thoughts that are not our thoughts," or, in phrase quite irreligious, about "anthropomorphic simplicity." At bottom the two sorts of criticism mean the same. To the first it may be a sufficient answer that such analogies have the sanction of Him who bade us infer the ways of God from what an earthly parent knows of his own eagerness to give good gifts to his children. And as to the second, it seems at least as probable that the charge of anthropomorphism has been leveled in the wrong direction. Mansel once said that if a God who answers prayer is fashioned in the likeness of human mutability, a God who does not answer prayer has been fashioned in the likeness of human obstinacy.¹ Whence, we may ask, comes that ostensibly exalted notion of a Great Spirit fulfilling cosmic purposes through finite agents and not deigning to concern himself with the destiny of those who are mere tools in his hand? Whence but from the image of a gigantic manufacturer, turning out a finished product

from raw material and careless of the odds and ends which constitute the inevitable wastage of the process? Perhaps all notion of purpose must be excluded from the Most High as "anthropomorphic." But if not, is God less ignobly humanized in conceiving him by an image drawn from the cotton-mill than in picturing him as the head of a family? What sort of purpose is that which gradually completes itself through the bloodstained march of evolution, and to which we must relate as a mere by-product the "grand thaumaturgic faculty of thought"? Apparently the aesthetic effect of the panorama is looked upon by the contemners of anthropomorphism as its own sufficient justification. And what is this but to erect the notion of a God "not anthropomorphic enough to love, yet anthropomorphic enough to be amused"?²

Thus the question arises whether, if the world as we see it is the sole theater of human fate, it can be called fair to the actors who are forced to play the parts in it. It is a question which the great pessimists have answered in very compelling terms long ago, and which has certainly been made no lighter by the tragedy of the war.

III

The impropriety of calling this demand egotistic becomes still more obvious if what we look for is far less a personal reward, or a provision of personal pleasure, than a chance to develop those higher faculties which we are conscious of possessing, and conscious at the same time of having so far used very imperfectly.

¹ Bampton Lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought," Lect. I.

² This phrase is borrowed from Dean Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*.

Our quest then seems to have no ignoble element at all, but to be the outcry of what is best within us against the failure of what is worst.

Amid the manifold difficulties of the "problem of evil" one clue alone has even the semblance of leading to a solution. We do get some distance on the explanatory way if we suppose that the world-process has for its supreme object the development of character. For we can see how character is expanded amid risks, disciplined in suffering, strengthened by impact against an obstacle, instructed through its very catastrophes. And it would puzzle us to imagine how in the complete absence of evil such education could be carried out. We recognize the value of the soul's adventure, with its inevitable hazards and hardships. The great ascetics felt this to such a degree as to suspect any primrose path that pretended to lead upward, and to see a heavenly prospect only along the steep and thorny way.

This point has been greatly overpressed by those who have thought that they could construct a complete intellectual theodicy which would leave no room for the action of faith. They have, in consequence, been sharply reminded that there is here at the utmost only a hint of the answer to our problem, and that the insight it gives is no more than that of "a dim candle over a deep mine."¹ But if the track it indicates is the right one, then the value of values in the universe, for which all that is so distressing there is to be judged worth while, must be the free moral personality which is being evolved and perfected.

And is not this, on any intelligent view, by far the most credible purpose which an eternal Mind could have set out to realize? Does it not consort with the highest intuition of value which we possess to regard conscience as the crown of creation and to think of the cosmogonic record as having reached a real climax in the words *Let us make man in our own image*?

Once more, it is not in the Christian, but in the anti-Christian, hypothesis that a naïve anthropomorphism lurks. For example, the apologetic of a hundred years ago had a hard struggle with the skepticism of astronomy. The unimaginable extensions of the stellar world which the telescope had made known seemed to dwarf the significance of the human race and to make absurd the notion that earth's inhabitants filled so central a place in the Divine Mind. But surely a truer perspective has been reached when we get rid of the notion that spatial vastness and material durability must be as impressive or as engrossing to the Creator as they are to us. It was not the least absurd of Robert Montgomery's adjurations to the Deity when he bade him pause and think how complex was the apparatus of the solar system and how grave was the responsibility of having charge of it. Nor does it seem much less foolish to speak with a present-day evolutionist about the "lamentable waste in Nature's productiveness" and the improvident haphazard which permits that

of fifty seeds

She often brings but one to bear.

What is all this but to conceive the Most High on the pattern of a mortal

¹ The phrase is Charles Kingsley's. Cf. *Yeast*, chap. ii.

artificer, limited in his resources, proud of his possessions in proportion to their bulk, forced to economize lest he run short, eager to exploit to the very utmost the potentialities at his disposal? Surely the last quality in man which gives us a token of the Divine is the dehumanized material rapacity of modern commerce?

Now, when we evaluate the universe in terms of those objects which we ourselves prize—happiness, virtue, aesthetic pleasure, and the rest—it is extremely difficult to be sure that the balance is not negative. As an acute, if somewhat rhetorical, writer puts it:

Can it seriously be asserted that the *present* race of men deserve to live because of their goodness or of their wisdom or of their beauty? Would not any impartial man, with a decently high moral standard in these respects, if he were armed with omnipotence for an hour, destroy the whole race with a destruction more utter than that which overtook the Cities of the Plain, lest he should leave daughters of Lot among the favoured few?¹

The result, however, may be different if we include in the scale a form of value which transcends all human calculus, but which may be well within the estimate of the Eternal Mind. How much suffering and disorder and crime are worth while, how many other interests are well lost, if advancing moral personalities can be called into being? We cannot say. But we can understand how in presence of such a criterion our judgements may be confounded and reversed.

One thing indeed we do seem able to say—that the development of person-

ality which is worth all this must be on a scale far more elevated and on a basis far more durable than that transient earthly life which we know. And to me at least it seems incontestable that enduring individuality, so far from being of no account in the total issue, must be of its very essence. All character is personal; so far as it is depersonalized it loses moral quality. That the stunted growths which have cost so much pain, the radiant promise which has been denied fulfilment, the germs of nobility which have appeared only to tantalize us by their swift decay, are justified by their life here for a moment before passing into the dark is surely a perfect paradox in a rationally ordered world. It is otherwise if we are permitted to believe that "it doth not yet appear what they shall be," and if amid the confused conflict of good and evil, not only in the wide arena of the world, but also in the mixed and distracted soul of even the best man, we can confidently wait until, in the pregnant words of the late Professor Royce, "this mortal shall have put on *individuality*." If such is our aspiration, in what terms shall we speak of those who would defame it as selfishness or greed?

IV

These points may become clearer if we look for a moment at the sort of "immortality" which is being recommended to us as free from base elements and on that account most worthy to be desired. Perhaps the egotism of the Christian hope will be more apparent when its critics show us another hope

¹ Dr. F. C. S. Schiller in *Riddles of the Sphinx*, p. 100.

which is not egotistic. They are eager to do so. A distinguished philosopher once assured me that he had no wish to live after his body is worn out, but that he emphatically wished to be remembered by his friends for "the few good things" that he had managed to do. And many writers, from George Eliot to Professor Bosanquet, have urged the notions of immortal influence, of the enduring mark which each of us may leave on the generations to come, of the solace in knowing that "to live in those we leave behind is not to die." With this we are told to rest content.

Now those who do not hesitate to caricature the Christian position by calling it the hope of a *pourboire* for the righteous must not complain if one points out into how paltry a thing this demand for remembrance is liable to degenerate. We agree that he who wants to be talked about for his good deeds while he is alive has a poor ambition. Is it any better to thirst for this after death? Carlyle used to speak with some contempt about the "celestial value of man's approbation," and about those who "fret their poor souls to fiddlestrings"¹ because this has not been sufficiently bestowed upon them. Is the matter wholly changed when we substitute posthumous fame for contemporary fame? Alas! it is the same sort of fickle populace to which the appeal is made in either case. Tennyson put the point well:

Do men love thee? Art thou so bound
To men, that how thy name will sound
Should vex thee lying underground?²

¹ *Latter Day Pamphlets*, "Hudson's Statue."

² "The Two Voices."

Moreover, waiving for the moment Mark Antony's disturbing thought that it is our evil deeds whose effect endures and our good which are likely to be interred with our bones, is it not common experience that whether for good or for evil no one's memory remains green for long? Mr. Hardy, whose courage never blinks a cruel fact, has a sad little poem³ on the quick action of this forgetfulness. The figure of the dead at first "shines within each faithful heart," but not many seasons have passed until it grows faint; when the men of the same generation have dropped away, the picture to those who succeed is no more than that of "a thin and spectral manikin," and even to the last survivor of those who lived with him the glowing image of the hero has become

a feeble spark
Dying amid the dark.

Indeed no poorer or more delusive hope could well be suggested than that which suffuses the rhetoric of a memorial sermon or rounds off a speech at the unveiling of a tablet. The talk goes on about a body that is buried in the earth, but a name that liveth forevermore. Oblivion within twelve months would be nearer the truth. Neither speaker nor hearers, though united in a generous conspiracy to treat such words as real, can be under so obvious a mistake about the corrosive rapidity of time.

It will of course be replied that it is not the fame as such, but the fact of having deserved the fame, which brings legitimate pleasure. I accept the amend-

³ "His Immortality," in *Poems of Pilgrimage*.

ment of the theory, merely pointing out that the need for it shows how careful we should be lest we traduce the higher impulses of mankind. But does even this desire escape the charge of just that same sort of "egotism" which belongs to the wish for individual survival in all except its coarser forms? I want to feel that *my* deeds have raised the human level of virtue or of culture or of happiness. It is not enough for me that advance has been made. The achievement of others gives me less satisfaction than my own achievement. Surely a falling away from that common consciousness to which all individual claims appear mean! I refuse to be merged in the mass. I cannot rejoice in just the same degree if Lord Lister has discovered asepsis as if I had discovered it myself. As the cynical Dr. Likeman says in *The Soul of a Bishop* we want the Most High not to deal with the world as a whole, but to take notice of ourselves personally. Is this wrong? Is it not rather the deep conviction that in the end the great values are personal values, that not the Hindu idea of a personality lost in Brahma, but the Christian belief of an incarnation of God in the individual, fulfils the highest moral impulse that we know?

V

The poets have great psychological insight into the moral and immoral desires of mankind, so that we do well to ask what they have said about an impulse whose worth seems doubtful. If you ask them whether immortality is a fact their answers are discordant. But if you ask whether the desire for it is noble or ignoble they are strikingly

at one. Few of them, and these not the greatest, have welcomed the idea of annihilation. Shelley indeed spoke of

Heaven a meed for all who dare belie
Their human natures.¹

But Shelley is an exception. To most of his order the eternal hope is something to be either encouraged or pitied, never to be blamed. It is either a venture of heroic faith or a myth of pathetic fancy. It is a postulate whose insight will find ultimate corroboration and whose courage will not fail of its reward, or it is the beautiful but delusive dream of those who know not the brutality of things and the contempt shown to man's most praiseworthy aspiration in this hard world of causes and effects.

It is significant, for instance, that Milton, even when he attributes the longing to Belial, takes care to present it as no selfish desire for continued pleasure, but as a recoil from the idea that mind with all its unique powers has been framed only to perish:

. . . for who would lose
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through
eternity?²

The school which our indignant ancestors named "Satanic" used to direct its derision, not against any egotism that it saw in the wish to be immortal, but against the naïve simplicity which clung to so improbable a belief, or the strange forgetfulness of life's suffering which could make men wish to renew it beyond the grave. Byron's soliloquy on the upturned skull has no suggestion of selfishness in him who could hope for its reanimation, but suggestions of folly in those who could think such a thing

¹ *Queen Mab*.

² *Paradise Lost*. Book II.

possible, or who did not rejoice that the tragic human struggle was at length ended. The little urn said more than a thousand homilies. The "dome of thought," the "gay recess of wisdom and of wit," could be looked into through lack-luster eyeless holes. The arch was broken, the wall ruined, the chambers desolate, the portals foul. The very worm had at last deserted it:

Can all saint, sage, or sophist ever writ
People this lonely tower, this tenement
refit?¹

For his own part Byron would have no desire to live again just because he had proved life to be so poor a thing. He would not take chances upon another experiment. A comparative estimate of joys and pains made it clear that

whatever thou hast been
'Tis something better not to be.²

The silence of that dreamless sleep
I envy now too much to weep.³

Yet no one has been more passionate than Byron in the protest that the individual here and now does not get his deserts, and it is plain that if he saw any likelihood of a future state governed by more equitable principles he would recognize in it no fulfilment of egotism, but the satisfaction of a genuine moral demand. Perhaps in his best mood he even entertained this, as when he wrote:

A land of souls beyond that sable shore,
To shame the doctrine of the Sadducee,
And sophists, madly vain of dubious lore.⁴

As the representative of the other extreme among the poets, Tennyson

has shown us in his incomparable piece "The Two Voices," how the moral nature is swayed backward and forward between the notion of a personal immortality and the plea that the purpose of the universe may be adequately fulfilled though every individual should perish. The doubting voice reminds us of our insignificance:

This truth within thy mind rehearse
That in a boundless universe
Is boundless better, boundless worse.

Think you this mould of hopes and fears
Could find none statelier than his peers
In yonder hundred million spheres?

Or will one beam be less intense
When thy peculiar difference
Is cancelled in the world of sense?

But the poet sees that whatever else may be said for this, it could never be called justice, nor could the world that was so planned be anything else than a horror:

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from that we have
The likeliest God within the soul?

Who loves, who suffer'd countless ills
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in the slime
Were mellow music match'd with him.⁵

Is this egotism? Or selfishness? Or the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits that we are sons of God?

¹ *Childe Harold*, Canto II.

² "Euthanasia."

³ "And Thou art Dead, as Young as Fair."

⁴ *Childe Harold*, Canto II.

⁵ *In Memoriam*, LV.

VI

There is indeed much danger that each of us may take himself too seriously, but there is little risk that we may think too seriously of Man. Egotism is bad, but there is also an unctuous repudiation of egotism in which we think to show ourselves humble by pouring scorn upon the human race, and at times even end in that most grotesque of all attitudes, a boastfulness about our own modesty. Who, for example, has not listened to public prayer in which acknowledgment is made that the Most High might justly have hid his face forever from our fallen species, and that a world of frail creatures "sentenced," as Coleridge put it, "to be born with such a fearful disproportion of their powers to their duties"¹ might in all fairness have been dismissed for their failure to eternal torment? Apart from the very undevout speculation that something different from the providential plan would have been perfectly appropriate, or that the redemption of the world was an act of divine caprice, is not this a quite un-Christian denial of value and of rights to the imperfect human soul? It sounds strange indeed to bring together Mr. H. G. Wells and the old Calvinists, but their moral standpoint is here the same, though put by the latter theologically and by the former so very untheologically. Under the veil of self-depreciation they are united in a common scorn and a common harshness toward their sinful kind. We read that in the Colossian church there were those who alleged egotism in coming with "boldness" to the very Throne. They thought that if poor mankind was

to communicate with the Holiest of all it must be through a long chain of angelic intermediaries. Was it such as Mr. Wells that St. Paul had in mind when he used that singular phrase "voluntary humility"?

Mr. Hardy has been mentioned in this paper, and it has long seemed to me that that great novelist, who has produced much that is both vehement and profane in its assaults upon the Faith, has an underlying sentiment on this subject which is far more Christian than it looks. Mr. Hardy has no belief in the survival after death, but he feels with St. Paul how miserable are those from whom this hope is taken. Though the misery cannot be escaped, he will not affect to minimize it or to conceal his bitter and thoroughly moral rebelliousness against a scheme which thus casts the human soul as rubbish to the void. Writers with what is called a "sunny earthiness," like George Meredith for example, are said to be free from Mr. Hardy's morbid pessimism. Meredith would go up each morning to the summit of Box Hill and "cry 'ha! ha!' to the gates of the world." But so long as in a tragic situation *Jean qui pleure* is more tolerable than *Jean qui rit*, Mr. Hardy will be felt to have struck the deeper note. The cosmic assumptions of *Jude* and *Tess* are terrible indeed. But if one is convinced of their truth, then by the authority of Him who bade us believe that not stellar systems and inflexible laws but human individuals are their Maker's anxious care, we shall say that the spirit of wild revolt is as truly Christian as a reckless acquiescence would be pagan, and that

¹ *Aids to Reflection.*

in this respect the most tragic of living writers is among those whom God hath girded though they have not known him.

Probably part of the impulse which has led to the prevalent neglect of the immortal hope is the fear of what George Eliot called "other-worldliness." The Dean of St. Paul's, in a singular article which he contributed last July to the *Hibbert Journal*, urged that the absence of any explicit teaching about a future state is an indication that a Christian should not make it a prominent object of his thoughts. It seems a curious idea, in view of the fact that such writers as Richard Baxter let their thoughts dwell on this a very great deal. One is tempted to say that *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* is a book of as genuine devotion as any that we are likely to get from those who affect spiritual altitudes which Baxter did not reach. Dean Inge, we may suppose, does not mean to censure the mood which gave us the fifteenth chapter of *II Corinthians*. If the tremendous anticipations which that chapter contains are seriously cherished, it does not seem either practicable to say just how far they should be meditated upon, or psychologically possible that they should be thrust into the background. Least of all at the present time can the wistful and expectant eye be closed. We may wonder indeed at the reticence of the

New Testament, and perhaps it is well not to guess too eagerly at reasons, or to pry with too inquisitive speculation into the wisdom that is above us. We can realize how reward and punishment alike become a hindrance rather than a help if they are kept too constantly in view. For it is as we serve our day that we develop those qualities which shall be worth preserving and carrying over into a larger day, and we often develop them best by thinking least of any outcome that they may have beyond their intrinsic beauty and their intrinsic worth. It is good that those whose duty is to be done amid the shadows and the gloom of this world's work should not be too frequently dazzled by a beatific vision. Not without reason has it been ordained that the things laid up in store are such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. The traveler must immerse his energy in battling with each difficulty of the road as it comes, cheered only by occasional and fitful glimpses of the City of the Quest. Such glimpses, however, few though they be, that soul must surely have which would not be utterly baffled by the enigmas of the way, but would believe, as has been finely said, that "there is a divine meaning in the world, and that humanity has not laid the sacrifice of hopes and struggles, of prayers and tears, upon the altar of an unknown and unknowable God."¹

¹ Edward Caird, *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*.